

# **ROANOKE COUNTY**

## **SIGN**

### **REGULATIONS**

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## WHY REGULATE SIGNS?

Signs compete to draw attention of motorists and pedestrians to an individual property. Without proper sign controls, the effectiveness of each sign could be reduced causing confusion to those passing the property. In addition, signs may overwhelm an area, detracting from the attractiveness of the environment, and by distracting motorists, signs could reduce traffic safety. Consequently, the Roanoke County Zoning Ordinance attempts to balance the needs of individual property owners to display signs with the public right to a safe and attractive environment.

## WHAT IS A SIGN?

A sign is any device, structure, fixture or placard using graphics, symbols, or writing for the purpose of advertising or identifying any establishment, product, service, or activity. There are two basic types of signs defined in the Roanoke County Zoning Ordinance, on premises and off-premises signs. On-premises signs are located on the same property as the establishment or business and can consist of permanent and temporary signs. Permanent signs include freestanding signs, monument signs, and wall mounted signs, while temporary signs would include banners, real estate and construction signs. Off-premise signs, primarily consisting of billboards, advertise a product or service not located on the same property. Many of these terms are defined in the County zoning ordinance.

## SIGN PERMITS

The following briefly describes the process for obtaining a sign permit:

- Except for exempted signs, as previously described, ALL signs erected or displayed in Roanoke County must have an approved sign permit.
- Applications for a sign permit may be obtained from the Roanoke County Department of Community Development.
- Any owner or any authorized agent of such owner may apply for a sign permit
- A sign permit application must include a sketch of the property showing the lot frontage, and information on the square footage of all existing signs on the property, and the area, size, structure, design, location, lighting, and materials for the proposed signs.
- More than one permanent sign on the same property may be included on one application. A temporary sign permit may be used for one temporary sign for one year.
- A sign permit is null and void after six months if the sign is not installed.

## OFF-PREMISES SIGNS

As of September 23, 2003, a cap was placed on the number of off premises signs in Roanoke County. Existing off-premises signs may be replaced if the new location is approved based on the standards set forth in Section 30-93-14.A. of the Roanoke County Zoning Ordinance.

In addition to the above, the following requirements apply to all off-premises signs:

- They are allowed only in the C-2, I-1 and I-2 Districts.
- They must be at least 500 feet (measured as a radius) from an existing off-premises sign, or one for which a valid permit has been obtained.
- They must be at least two hundred (200) feet from any residential zoning district, public square, park, school, library, or property used for religious assembly.
- They are prohibited on any roof structure, and shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height above the abutting road.
- Side by side, double and multi-decker off-premises signs are prohibited.
- They must be at least forty (40) feet from the centerline of any public right-of-way, or 15 feet from any front property line, whichever is greater, and must be set back fifteen (15) feet from any front property line, whichever is greater, and must be set back fifteen (15) feet from any side or rear property line.
- The maximum size of any off-premises sign is 378 square feet plus ten (10) percent for embellishments.
- Tri-vision changeable messages shall be allowed on existing and replaced off-premises signs, located within C-2, I-1 and I-2 zoning districts, which meet the location and design standards. Minimum dwell time that an image must remain visible shall be ten (10) seconds. Maximum twirl time between image changes shall be three (3) seconds.

## DISCLAIMER

This brochure is published as an aid in educating the public on the Roanoke County Sign requirements. Every attempt has been made to accurately reflect the specific language in the Zoning Ordinance. However, any discrepancy will be governed by the provisions contained in Section 30-93 of the Zoning Ordinance.

**For additional information contact the Roanoke County  
Department of Community Development at (540) 772-2068.**

## PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs are specifically prohibited in any location in Roanoke County.

- Any sign which is nailed, tacked, posted or any manner attached to a utility pole or structure supporting wire, cable, or pipe: or to public property of any description.
- Pennants, ribbons, spinners, or other similar moving devices.
- Any sign located within a public right-of-way, other than official traffic signs.
- Flashing or revolving lights, or beacons.
- Any sign that simulates an official traffic sign.
- Any sign that rotates, or moves through the use of electrical or wind power.
- Signs advertising activities or products that are illegal.
- Any electrical sign that does not display the UL, ETL, CSA, or ULC label.
- Any sign that obstructs the vision of motorists or pedestrians at any intersection.
- Portable signs.
- Roof signs.

## TEMPORARY SIGNS

Temporary signs are any signs which are temporarily affixed to the ground, a building, or other structure including but not limited to banners or flags which must meet the following requirements:

- Each business can display one temporary sign at any time during a year.
- In commercial zoning districts, the total square footage of any temporary sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet, all other zoning districts the total square footage of the sign shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet.
- Real estate signs, that are not exempt, are permitted up to ninety-six (96) square feet, but must be removed within fourteen (14) days after the property has been sold or leased.
- Construction signs up to ninety-six (96) square feet are permitted, but must be removed at the completion of construction.
- All temporary signs must be set back fifteen (15) feet from the front property line.

## FEEES

The following non-refundable fees must be submitted with each sign permit application:

- Permanent Sign = \$25 + \$4 per \$1,000 sign value or portion thereof
- Temporary Sign = \$25
- Illuminated Sign = \$25 extra for electrical permit

## EXEMPT SIGNS

The following signs are specifically exempt from the sign regulations, and no sign permits are required by Roanoke County.

- Directional signs of three (3) square feet or less.
- Street address signs of not more than ten (10) square feet.
- No trespassing signs of not more than ten (10) square feet.
- Flags and insignias of any government except when displayed for commercial purposes.
- On-premises real estate signs up to five (5) square feet (sixteen (16) square feet in commercial or industrial districts).
- Clocks that display time and temperature.
- Political campaign signs outside of the public right-of-way.
- Signs for the sale of Christmas trees and wreaths between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- Signs on the inside of establishments.
- On-premises agricultural product signs.
- Signs that promote civic, religious, educational or charitable organizations or causes.

## MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

The following additional provisions may apply:

- In shopping centers, new or existing businesses may modify or replace attached signs provided the area of the new signage is equal to or less than the original displayed signage.
- Lots without public street frontage are allowed signage based upon the applicable district regulations and the frontage width of the lot that parallels the nearest public street.

**PERMANENT SIGNS**

Permanent signs are governed by the zoning district in which the property is located. TABLE 1 below summarized the basic sign requirements by zoning district.

- The total signage allowed on a lot is determined by multiplying the actual lot frontage by the square footage per linear foot of frontage shown in the Table.
- Each business is allowed to have the maximum sign area shown in TABLE 1, provided that the total signage does not exceed the maximum allowed on the lot.
- Businesses that request sign permits for lots that already meet or exceed their allowable sign allocation may install a sign up to 25 square feet in area (or, in shopping malls, 100 square feet if specific standards of the zoning ordinance are met).
- Freestanding signs on lots under single ownership must be separated by at least 250 feet.
- Minimum frontage for freestanding signs will be as determined by the zoning district.

TABLE 1

	<b>AG-3 &amp; AG-1 Districts</b>	<b>AR, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4 Districts</b>	<b>AV &amp; NC Districts</b>	<b>C-1 District</b>	<b>C-2 District</b>	<b>I-1 &amp; I-2 Districts</b>
Square Footage per Linear Foot of Frontage (ft.)	0.25	0.25	1.0	0.5	1.5	1.5
Maximum Area Business Signs (sq. ft.)	50	30	400	500	500	300
Maximum Area for Identification Signs (sq. ft.)	30	30	Treated as a business sign	Treated as a business sign	Treated as a business sign	Treated as a business sign
Maximum Height for Freestanding Signs (ft.)	15	10	15	As determined by zoning district	As determined by zoning district	As determined by zoning district
Maximum Number of Permanent signs per business	4	2	4	4	5	5
Lot Frontage Requirement for Freestanding Signs	Property must meet minimum required lot frontage for the zoning district					